

## MECAC Meeting Minutes: April 9-10, 2008

Members: Dale Mahugh, Patty West, Connie Sturgis, Viola Wood, Dave Cook, Judy Kendall, Shelly Meyer, Kim Whiteman, Cindy O'Dell, Roy Kemp, Becky Fleming-Siebenaler, Shelly Fischer, Sandra Morris, Stephanie Goetz, Barb Perzinski, Alma Young, Libby Hancock, Carrie Leu, Jane Schumacher, Terry Minow, Sheilah Mevis, Jeanette Hall

Staff: Linda Kjorstad, Angi Rayfield, Sally Mueller, Lisa Murphy, Chauntel Lucier, Jamie Palagi, Chris Hettinger, Melody Olson, Renne't Sarbu

Guests: Jule Four Star, Ann Klaas, Roger Wright, Hank Hudson, Anne Carpenter, Jane Schumacher, Val Mattfeldt

### Wednesday

Welcome- Introductions, new members, check in  
New member orientation was held from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Housekeeping items- evaluations/ travel claims

Each meeting has sign in sheets near the door. Please sign in each day.

There are evaluations available, please take one, fill it out at the end of the meeting and return it. Renne't went over travel claims (which are on the white or yellow sheets).

Set meeting dates for 2009:

Meeting dates for SFY 09 are as follows:

January 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>.

ECSB Updates:

### EPP

Jamie reported on the EPP process. Four EPP requests have been submitted from the Bureau. These include the Child and Adult Food Program present law adjustment, to accept the increase in federal funds, the Child Care Federal Poverty Index, Market Rate, Case Load Maintenance; the Child Care Additional 2% Market Rate Increase; and an FTE request to add one full-time employee to the Bureau. The child care federal poverty index, market rate, case load maintenance and the child care additional 2% market rate increase are very important for ECSB to continue supporting child care scholarships, reimbursement at the 75th percentile of the current market rate, and to maintain the sliding fee scale.

On the public assistance side there is a TANF cash benefit increase request and a proposal to continue the working caretaker relative child care program, which has been very successful. The Quality Rating Improvement System did not make

the list, although the Governor's office is aware that we are working on this initiative.

Roy Kemp asked about legislative representatives to MECAC. These positions are open. The hope would be to find legislators who would attend meetings. A mailing to inform legislators of the opportunity to serve on MECAC was discussed. It would be ideal to have a representative from each political party serve.

#### Economic Impact Study update

A draft has been submitted to the Governor's Office and ECSB for review. The study will be released on May 21<sup>st</sup> at the Workforce Development meeting in Billings, and on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at the School Readiness Summit in Helena. The study includes recommendations for policy makers, business leaders, and for child care providers.

#### QRIS

Jamie reviewed where we are with the process. The Framework Committee has been working on the design of the quality rating improvement system. The Demand Group has been working on the parent piece of the system and consumer education needs. The Practitioner Group has been working on incentives and resources to accompany the framework. Finally, a group has been working on the point systems to accompany the framework. There will be five levels in the new framework; One Star through Five Star.

#### ECES/ Head Start State Collaboration Report- Mary Jane

Sally Mueller reported for Mary Jane Standaert who was attending a Head Start meeting. Mary Jane attended the National Collaboration Directors' meeting in February. The most immediate concern for MECAC is that each Collaboration Director is directed to conduct a needs assessment of each Head Start and Early Head Start program in our state regarding collaboration and coordination in each of eight target areas with the addition of reading readiness and library programs, professional development and connections between curriculum and state Early Learning Guidelines. Also discussed was the mandate in the Head Start reauthorization that each state develop an Early Learning Council.. Some states already have groups with similar missions and or functions, e.g. MECAC in Montana.

Mary Jane also attended the national ECES Grantee meeting in Baltimore. Other attendees included Christy Hill-Larson representing the Head Start Collaboration office, Sally Mueller representing Child Care and three representatives from Child Protection Services including Liz Harter, Robin Suzor and Monica Poole-Lillyblad. This team will bring together Bureau Chiefs from state government that are part of the Early Childhood System to do planning and problem solving on sharing data, resources, and information, and discussing how to more effectively serve young children.

There are 11 School Readiness community teams that have each received a \$1000 grant. Mary Jane has been to Great Falls, Kalispell, Helena, and Missoula for school readiness initiative presentations and will be going to Glasgow next.

The School Readiness Summit is scheduled for May 21<sup>st</sup> in the evening and all day on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Beth Rous from the National Early Childhood Transition Center has been invited to present on community strategies for transitioning all children into school. Mary Jane has been working with the Indian Education For All (IEFA) and the Achievement office of OPI to support Rocky Boy Reservation better regarding transitions and appropriate early childhood practices. This is a model proposed and if successful, will hopefully be replicated in other places.

#### Budget Overview- Chris Hettinger

Chris provided a handout tracking the Fiscal Year 2008 budget and projections for 2009. Target expenditures are based on history and expectations. It is anticipated that \$20.3 million will be spent on the scholarship program this year. Expenses for Administration will be \$3.6 million, which is under the required 5%. The bottom line is that we anticipate \$28.6 million to be spent this year, hoping that it will give us a \$1 million surplus to carry over into 2009.

Libby Hancock pointed out that the history of the fund is important for people to understand. CCDF requires that 70% of a state's appropriation be used to help parents pay for child care.

#### Background check report

Becky Fleming-Siebenaler reported that during the last legislative session there was a Senate Joint Resolution (SJ7) that asked the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice to develop a process defining criminal background checks for people who provide direct care. Currently in child care, both criminal and protective services background name checks are done unless a person has lived outside Montana. In this case, a fingerprint check is done through the Department of Justice. The SJ7 workgroup process is specific to Health Care facilities and does not address the issues in child care. Volunteers for Children Act allows us to access and receive background check results, but not to give out. Fingerprinting is an expensive process. It costs \$6,000 a year to have access to CJIN. If this were not available, it would cost providers around \$160,000 a year.

The name based check out side child care licensing and ECSB is \$5. The council recommended that this be put on the agenda of the Program Policy and Public Policy Committees.

#### QRIS

Linda Kjorstad presented on Implementing Quality Assessment and Improvement Systems, drawing on information she received when she attended a conference in North Carolina in February. There are four main challenges for implementing the quality rating system. These include accountability; ensuring widespread provider participation; providing adequate outreach and support for Providers; and adequate financial support.

The QRIS groups met and reported back to the large group.

## QRIS Committee's

### Standards/Framework group

This group held several conference calls and has developed a draft framework for the QRIS system.

### Supply-practitioner group

This group began to develop a star tool kit based on the draft framework. They also began to develop a list of resources and supports that would be available for providers to assist them in moving up in the system.

### Supply-program group

This group discussed the different methods for assigning ratings. They are recommending that a point system be developed.

### Demand group

While the long term goal is to create a demand for quality by educating parents, the immediate concern is gathering input from child care providers and others regarding design of the system. The CCR&Rs will be used to help communicate with providers.

## Next steps for QRIS development

It is necessary to stay committed to having the rollout plan. During the committee meetings on Thursday, Public Policy will discuss working with providers, rolling it out, what it is going to look like and what the avenue is. Program Policy will discuss what the issues are with CCUBS, and the issues with administrative rules. Quality committee will work on the framework and the point system, incentives and resources and pull them all together. The Early Childhood Services Bureau staff and the Child Care Licensing Staff have committed to working together to fine tune Level one and what that means with licensing and what it doesn't mean.

Thursday, April 10, 2008

### Quality Committee-

Best Beginnings programs updates:

\*Specialized Training RFP – Lisa

The Specialized Training RFP has been released. Many questions and calls have been fielded. The topics of interest listed on the RFP are provided as examples. Proposals may be on any topic that is felt to meet a need in the state for training.

\*Merit pay – Lisa

Merit pay applications will be out soon. The applications will be located on the web with fillable fields, although they will still need to be printed out for signatures. Hard copies will still be sent to R&Rs. Applications can be submitted via mail or hand delivered.

The Infant/Toddler merit pay will no longer be an application process. An invoice will be sent at time of certification and when the CITC application is received.

\*Mini Grants – Linda

Spreadsheets were given out to the Quality committee for the past three quarters. In October \$25,000 will be added to the regular mini grants. The increase in grant funds is possible because provider grants are being phased out.

\*CITC – Linda

Infant/Toddler II Class will be available this summer. It will be a 4 credit class. The cost will be \$210 and participants can choose to audit for non-college credit. It will be held June 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> (intensive) at Salish Kootenai College. Cost of class includes Web CT and access to library for resources. There have been 264 contracts that have been issued since 2006 that have received the full \$1600.

Update on Touchpoints discussion – Bureau's view – Jamie  
This must be approached in a way that ensures that public dollars are not being used to endorse one approach. Mary Jane is researching how Touchpoints intersects with school readiness efforts across the state. The Bureau is considering drafting an RFP for a project that focuses on family support and developing this skill in child care settings.

**Recommendation:** ECSB draft RFP in alignment with the model of Touchpoints that the Quality Committee will review at the working meeting this summer or by e-mail. State would monitor RFP. **Action** – full consensus.

Update on non-credit CDA training in CCR&R's – Kim Richter  
There are about 6 R&R that are doing little to nothing with non-credit CDA's. Some, such as Family Connections have historically provided this training. It is very expensive to give the type of classroom CDA that Family Connections has been giving. They may be unable to continue with the same format and might reformat.

NAEYC Professional Development Institute MT Team –  
Libby

NAEYC has written a letter to MECAC supporting the QRIS and would like to partner with the Bureau in this effort. The letter suggests

consideration of a grant category that allows organizations to develop projects that provide an onsite technical assistance, mentoring assistance, and/or professional experience to programs seeking accreditation. There is a team from Montana (Inclusion, OPI, ECSB, Higher Ed, Head Start, and Child Care associations) that have been invited to the the national NAEYC Conference on June 7, 2008. (Angi – is this correct?)(Check with Linda on this one\_)

Playground safety –

There was a discussion regarding NAEYC's movement toward requiring that playgrounds be inspected by a playground safety inspector. QAD is considering whether Child Care Licensors might become certified inspectors

#### Program Policy Committee- Sapphire Room

SJ7 – Fingerprint/Background process - Becky

Child care is no longer being included in this discussion for SJ7 because they already have a process in place and working. DOJ is looking into whether the providers can do conditional hiring while waiting for background check results. Licensing is looking to DOJ to get information out to providers. An interpretive memo will go out on the web from licensing. A question came up regarding the LUP program – why is it different from licensing, going back to age 18 years compared to licensing going back 5 years. Sally, Stephanie and Angi will get together and look over the Policy to come up with some statistical information.

A community request came to the committee to look at the Best Beginnings Scholarships and allow students not to have a work requirement. The Committee has said that a person is eligible as long as they meet the minimum work requirement and the Committee is not prepared right now to come forward and ask that to be changed. A separate community request came to the committee regarding teen parents. They would like to look for a maximum co payment of \$10 for teen parents.

**Recommendation:** Recommend for teen parents who are actively seeking a diploma and/or GED has a minimum co pay of \$10. - **consensus**

The group discussed a self-employment issue where a LUP owns her own business and the parent of the child works for her. The R&R feels strongly that the mother is being paid to watch her own children. No recommendation.

QRIS – CCUBS issues will be huge, but will have to be one of the last things to talk about. Payment issues, point system, and level system cannot address until framework is ready to go.

CACFP Policy- The group discussed business hours of care and recommends that a representative of the CACFP Sponsors Association

take the policy and the concerns to Mary Musil, who is the CACFP Manager.

#### Public Policy Committee-Meadowlark Room

The Committee discussed items that might be of interest to the Montana Advocates for Children as they start to form their agenda. The Quality Rating Improvement System is an initiative they may have an interest in. MAC may also want to advocate for the Market Rate and the Poverty index.

This group had further discussion regarding the meeting that Mary Jane and Sally went to in Baltimore, and on bringing Bureau Chiefs together to work on system building and collaboration. This should happen soon, hopefully before the September meeting. Mary Jane and Jamie met with the Governor's Office to discuss data sharing and a proposed meeting with Division Administrators. The Governor's Office should drive the discussion with the division administrators and department directors. This is part of the work to "use old money in new ways."

Public Policy is waiting to see what the final framework will be from the Quality Committee. Then we will be able to work on action plans as far as communication and rollout.

The issue of the cost of childcare for providers to administer good care and the cost for parents continues to come up. There was a discussion regarding how we impact this issue.

#### Discussion, Recommendations, action items

There was a reminder that if one hits reply to a message to the MECAC listserv it will go out to all members on listserv. There was a reminder that this council cannot lobby as we are an advisory council to the executive branch.

Next meeting dates- September 9 & 10, 2008 same location